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## BOOK DEPARTMENT

*A full description of the books received, giving size, price, etc., will be found in the list of "Publications Received" in this issue, or, generally, in a preceding issue of the SCHOOL REVIEW.*

### *George William Curtis as an Educator.\**

Many interests divided the attention of George William Curtis while living and have paid their tribute to him since his death. But whatever department of life or letters may have the strongest and most enduring claim to his name he adorned them all; his service was always conscientious and bore the quality of distinction. Like Milton, his ideal English scholar whom he so much admired, he could not praise "a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed", but turned resolutely from the blandishments and ease of life to its obvious and severe tasks and duties. His heart, as Wordsworth said of Milton's, "The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

A travelled man from foreign lands, he united the culture of the old world with the democratic spirit of the new. An editor influential and independent, he was as a popular educator through the press the peer of his contemporaries. A graceful essayist and genial *censor morum* of his day and generation, he taught from the Easy Chair a larger circle of pupils than any college president can reach. Many a secondary teacher can bear witness to his influence on young minds from homes to which the Easy Chair had monthly entrance. A lecturer and orator on the Lyceum when it was in its glory, he taught the people as one having authority. As a reformer he saw one cause an accomplished fact, and laid so well the foundations of another, of which education is the chief corner stone, that those who come after will need only to carry the structure to completion.

But his educational work and influence were not merely incidental and subordinate, the occupation of an idle hour. Nor were they perfunctory only. They were direct and inspirational to a marked degree. Of this, the handsome volumes of his orations and addresses, edited by his friend, Professor Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard, bear abundant evidence. Nor is their value confined to the inspiration and delight of the passing hour. In 1887 Mr. Curtis wrote to a friend who desired him to publish them: "My addresses are really ephemeral." They have a permanent histor-

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*\*Orations and Addresses of George William Curtis.* Edited by CHARLES ELIOT NORTON. Three volumes. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1894.

ical value, even though one may not anticipate as much for them as does Regent Fitch in his admirable Memorial Address. Soon after the death of Mr. Curtis, Professor N. M. Butler said in a brief editorial: "His services to higher education were less conspicuous than those to literature and public life, but hardly less important."

George William Curtis was born February 24, 1824. He died August 31, 1892. He was elected Regent of the University of the State of New York, April 12, 1864; Vice-Chancellor, January 14, 1886; Chancellor, January 30, 1890.

Of the nineteen orations, lectures, speeches, and addresses enshrined in the first volume, seven are carefully prepared orations and addresses on educational subjects, and to our mind, judged by oratorical and literary standards, with the possible exception of the first, they are the very best of them all. There is a certain looseness of construction, a lack of concentration of thought and expression, in his earlier orations. But these "are of imagination all compact." They treat of the ever important relations, never more important to the commonwealth than now, of scholarship to life. The duty of the American scholar to politics and the times, the public duty of educated men, the leadership of educated men, the spirit and influence of the higher education, the higher education of women, the University of the State of New York, education and local patriotism, these vital topics were all treated in the masterly manner of which he alone of the regents of our memory was capable. For, with the exception of the first, they were all delivered at institutions of higher and secondary education after he was elected regent. We wish that his publishers might issue these seven orations and addresses in a separate volume. They would make one of the best educational books of the year, worthy of a place in the library of every teacher who desires to connect his thought and his work, through moral influence and intellectual elevation, vitally with the life of the state, the highest object of united earthly human endeavor. Their historical worth, their literary grace and charm, their inspirational influence, the high level of discussion give them a value that is more than ephemeral. They will endure as long as the memories of those who were so fortunate as to hear them, as long as the subjects of which they treat continue to have a necessary application to the manifold and pressing needs of our American life. They stir the soul of the scholar as the old ballad of Percy and Douglas moved the heart of Sir Philip Sidney "more than with a trumpet." They make him feel the full force of the orator's suggestion, that he ought to be in touch with the interests of to-day, that he ought not to cease to be a citizen or a man, but that he ought to connect his scholarship, as Milton did, with life. He seems ever to be inculcating the great lesson of Wordsworth's noble ode: "Learn by a mortal

yearning to ascend towards a higher object." And this is the open secret of the power of every true teacher, the test of the real value of any institution. One recalls the words of Burke, the spirit of which breathes from every page of this noble volume: "But, if we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty; if we do not stretch and expand our minds to the compass of their object; be well assured, that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimension of our minds."

Nor do these orations and addresses lack an educational suggestiveness more direct. They abound in a sententious wisdom that is truly edifying if not pedagogical. The excellent index to the first volume contains over thirty references under the word education. There are sentences that have the force of maxims: "Education is the entrance of the soul into its rightful dominion of intelligence." "To teach a child to read is not to teach him to read with profit." "The constitution of the United States is the work of American scholars." "If American scholarship is not in place it is in power." "A man can pay too high a price for money." "In literature it is a poor education which ends in accurate grammar and precision of metres instead of a love of letters." "Technical scholarship begins in a dictionary and ends in a grammar. The sublime scholarship of John Milton began in literature and ended in life." "You have no right to sophisticate your minds." "The highest gift of education is noble living, generous character, the spiritual delight which springs from familiarity with the loftiest ideals of the human mind, the spiritual power which saves each generation from the intoxication of its own success." Let the circumsised pedagogue beat that! For he is not a teacher, which is one outwardly; neither is that teaching, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a teacher which is one inwardly; and teaching is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. Such a teacher was George William Curtis, still the spiritual Chancellor Emeritus of us all.

Mr. Curtis was senior regent when he was elected chancellor. He sat in the chair of Jay and Verplanck and Kent and had acted four years as vice-chancellor. He honored the office and dignified it. He attended the meetings faithfully, discharged the duties assigned him on committees, and exerted a great influence in promoting the growth and extending the usefulness of the state library. He came to the chancellorship in the fulness of his powers, and the influence of his lofty ideals and love of letters was felt profoundly during the period, all too brief, in which he occupied an educational position of great honor and dignity. His interest in the expanding work of the University was strong and tempered by a fine enthusiasm. He attested the value of the services of the regents from his own experience. He regarded the

University as an institution of vast powers and responsibilities, as the stimulating heart of a constantly enlarging and progressive educational life. He considered its greatest service not one of statistics and details, but one of moral influence and intellectual elevation. And that service found in him its finest and fullest expression in the splendid address in the Convocation of 1890 in which he expanded the minds of those who heard him to the compass of their object. "The grace of our summer is the literary festival," he began, serenely unconscious that the grace of the literary festival was shed abroad in the crowded senate chamber from the chancellor himself. That voice expressive of the rich depths of his own spiritual life where there was no divorce between intellect and spirit, who can forget it? "Fled is that music: do I wake or sleep?" "When a man lives with God," says Emerson, "his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn." We heard the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn, and, like Wordsworth who listened to the song of *The Highland Reaper*, we bore the music in our hearts long after it was heard no more.

The educational ideal of Mr. Curtis was no doubt largely literary. Perhaps the best brief statement of it is in the *Easy Chair* essay on Commencement: "It is the celebration of the intellectual life." \* \* "But the deep and permanent charm is the consciousness of the infinite worth and consolation of letters." And it was this infinite worth and consolation that attracted him, not the elegant trifling, the purple patches, the mere millinery, the excellent foppery of the world of letters with which he was too often identified by the popular mind. Roscoe Conkling, the Apollo of his party, let fly a bitter shaft tipped with the venom which he used so freely, an epithet which increased this unjust conception of Mr. Curtis. Edward Everett Hale protested earnestly against his being regarded chiefly as a dainty man who valued especially the arts of expression. There is nothing in his orations and addresses to justify this popular judgment. He was a man of deep and strong convictions and had the courage of them. His educational service was truly one of moral influence and intellectual elevation.

On the relations of the state to education he held decided opinions. He thought it a delusion that the concern of the state begins and ends with the primary school. The public good sense "not a rigid theory of the limited function of the state must determine the limits of instruction." He praised the appropriation of the legislature for the system of University extension and considered no recent legislation upon education more significant and important. But whatever view he took the man was more than his theme, he put his character into it, he kept a steadfast gaze on the eternal interests of the soul. May we not without exaggeration apply to him the words that close his tribute to Emerson: "Happy

teacher whose long and lovely life illustrated the dignity and excellence of the truth, old as the morning and as ever fresh, that fidelity to the divine law written upon the conscience is the only safe law of life for every man"?

O. B. Rhodes

Adams, N. Y.

*How to Study and Teach History.* With Particular Reference to the History of the United States. By B. A. HINSDALE, PH. D., LL. D. New York: D. Appleton & Co. pp. xxii+346.

One of the latest acquisitions of the *International Education Series*, is Professor Hinsdale's *How to Study and Teach History*. The title is not strikingly novel; neither is there anything in the book alarmingly radical or revolutionary. The work is a straight forward setting forth of the value and scope of the study of history, with practical suggestions as to method. The author has also placed a large field of literature under contribution, and in small compass presents the results not only of his own study and experience, but also of prominent educators and historians. The book is therefore of real value, not only to the teacher of history but to the student as well.

The question whether history should have a place in the educational curriculum, is no longer in the courts. It has taken us here in America some time to discover the old world. The doctrine of evolution is as important to the student of history and to the student of natural science. So long as American educators acquiesced in the popular conviction that we owe the natives of the old world little and have still less to expect from them; that they rather are our debtors having everything to learn from us, it was difficult to impress upon university boards or even university faculties, that outside of the barest outline, European history had much for the American student. The landing of Mary Chilton on Plymouth Rock was of far more importance in the progress of the world, than the landing of William and his fighting barons on the Pevensey coast in 1066. The wars of Pequods and Naragansetts, or the interminable palavers of Mohawks and Dutchmen were of far more importance in an educational way, than the majestic strifes of Roman pope and German emperor or the wrestle of the commons of France with their feudal lords for civic liberty.

We have now, however, at the close of the fifth century after Columbus, discovered the old world. We of the new world are neither the last nor the greatest creation of Omniscient Wisdom. Omnipotence has not after all exhausted itself in the creation of the "universal Yankee nation". All the generations of men have not wandered into darkness, that we alone might have light. Our place is not before the footlights with the audience